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Tell your friends to grab their own free copy of this handbook and get some tips for working together at thankyourbody.com/friend-challenge.

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YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY

You are awesome.

Really.

The question is: Are you ready to feel and look even more awesome? I hope so! I am so excited you are taking this opportunity to improve your life by grabbing a copy of *Your Simply Healthy Handbook*. I know there is a lot of information floating around online, and it can be really confusing to know who and what to trust!

My promise to you is to keep things as simple, easy, and practical as possible. You can totally do this.

Oh, I'm being rude. I didn't even introduce myself!

If you're new to Thank Your Body, my name is Robin Konie. Hi.

I'm not a doctor, nutritionist, or personal trainer. I am a mom, movement therapist, researcher, and author. I adore my family and ice cream (made with real ingredients, of course). My little family of four moved to New Zealand in July of 2015 and we are loving our new adventure here.



I'm wildly passionate about helping people become healthy and happy. That passion drives my content for Thank Your Body, and is why this free book exists. (You can read more about me here.)

I'm going to be guiding you through a 3 week journey. I have spent months creating this ebook, and it's based on years of research and personal application.

Whether you're new to healthy living or a veteran who just needs a little 'push' back in the right direction, I'm here to cheer you on.

I have my pom poms all ready to go!

How to use this book:

This book is designed to fit your life. I'm laying out a simple plan because I know how busy you are. This book is less about doing *everything* under the sun, and instead focuses on a few key changes that make the biggest impact.

I've organized the content in easy-to-follow, day-by-day instruction. Sure, you could sit down and ready the whole thing at once, but I want you to take some time to digest each piece. A little each day.

I will cover the 3 critical areas for a healthy life: Eating real food, moving often (and correctly), and living naturally. I've also included some information on getting quality sleeping and managing stress. Because, let's be honest, it doesn't matter how perfect your diet is if you aren't sleeping or overwhelmed with stress. I call these the 5 pillars of health.

When these five areas are thriving and balanced with each other (notice how I didn't say "perfect"), you can find that happy sweet spot: A healthy life that gives you energy, time, and overall awesomeness.

But before you jump in, I want you to start with a simple personal assessment. Don't worry, it's not some scary test that will leave you feeling hopeless. It is, however, an important part in looking at the big picture of your health.

Little commitment, big rewards.

I'm asking you to dedicate at least 15 minutes a day to reading and working on each lesson. That's it! Set a timer on your phone and be consistent about reading daily. Grab a notebook or journal where you can write down your thoughts, action plans, and goals.

Just 15 minutes a day. No excuses. I'm making this as simple as possible, but it will only work if you commit.

As you go through this book, don't forget that your dedication is an essential component. Even more important is your willingness to trust and thank your body. Remember, you can't heal a body you hate.

Phew! You still with me? I hope so!

Why don't you take a moment right now and set your alarm for tomorrow's lesson. Get ready to rumble! Rah! Rah!



Listen up. I've got my big girl panties on today because I going to be brutally honest, and I need you to do the same.

So let's get to it.

On a scale of 1 - 10, how would you rate your overall health?

Seriously. How do you feel about your health *right now*? Do you feel energized, vibrant, well rested? What would you like to change? Why?

My guess is that you're looking for some improvements. Maybe you need a major overhaul. Chances are you have some habits that need changing. Those habits don't make your a bad person. But still, they need to go. To do that we need to take a closer look at your health. A more objective look. One that will provide a roadmap to your future, more-awesome self.

Grab a piece of paper and a pencil (or feel free to open up a Word document if that's your cup of tea) and answer the questions found below. Remember, nobody else is going to see your results, and there are no actual grades here, so be honest. Brutally honest.

Once you've added up your score for each section you are set to go! Tomorrow we'll be taking a look at those numbers so you can create a do-able and personalized action plan.

Important Note:

Please, please, please do not jump to any conclusions about the recommendations I am going to make in this course based on the questions in this assessment. I am all for a baby-steps approach to healthier living. I also firmly believe there is no one-size-fits-all plan. This assessment is merely a starting point.

Also, don't get anxious if your score seems low. Whether all four categories need help or one category is pulling you down, you have the capacity to make simple and small changes that will bring lasting results.

I'll show you how.

So take the assessment and then be excited because now we have the knowledge to create a life you love.

PERSONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

This Personal Health Assessment covers the 5 areas for healthy (and happy) living. You'll notice that there are only four parts to this assessment as the last two categories (Sleep and Stress) have been combined into one category as they tend to go hand in hand.

PILLAR 1: EAT REAL

For each YES answer you provide add the assigned points to your score. For NO answers, you get zero points.

- → Do you cook your own meals from scratch (heating up a TV dinner does NOT count) at least 80% of the week? (5 points)
- → Do you eat at least 5 servings of fruits & vegetables a day? (5 points)
- → Do you eat real butter, olive oil, or coconut oil instead of margarine, vegetable oils (like canola or soybean oil), or other 'butter substitutes'? (5 points)
- → Do you avoid processed foods at least 80% of the week (like cereal, chips, crackers, food bars, store bought cookies, cakes, doughnuts, etc.)? (5 points)

- → Do you buy organic for higher fat animal products like beef and dairy? (3 points)
- → Do you buy organic fruits & vegetables (or at least buy organic for foods found on the 'dirty dozen' list)? (2 points)
- → Do you eat naturally fermented foods like yogurt, sauerkraut, homemade pickles, etc. at least a couple times a week? (2 points)
- → Do you read labels on the food your buy at least 90% of the time? (2 points)
- → Do you generally eat when you're hungry and stop when you feel full? (1 point)

Total Score for Food & Nutrition: ____/ 30 points

~

PILLAR 2: MOVE OFTEN

For each YES answer you provide add the assigned points to your score. For NO answers, you get zero points.

- → Do you exercise at a moderate to intense level (such as hiking, climbing, running, lifting weights, power yoga, swimming laps, playing a game of basketball, Zumba, etc.) at least 2 times a week for 20 or more minutes? (5 points)
- → Do you move at an easy to moderate level (such as walking, doing basic housework, gentle yoga, shooting hoops, etc.) at least five times a week for 30 or more minutes? (5 points)
- → Do you take hourly breaks while working at a desk to get up, walk, and stretch? (5 points)
- → Can you walk up two flights up stairs without needing to catch your breath? (5 points)
- → Can you run at a fast sprint for thirty seconds without feeling like passing out? (3 points)
- → Can you do 5 'perfect' push-ups ('girl style' is okay)? (3 points)
- → Can you do 10 'perfect' push-ups (again, on your knees is fine)? (2 points)

- → Do you enjoy moving? (1 point)
- → Can you touch your toes without bending your knees? (1 point)

Total Score for Exercise: ____/ 30 points

~

PILLAR 3: LIVE NATURALLY

For each YES answer you provide add the assigned points to your score. For NO answers, you get zero points.

- → Do you have at least 5 real plants inside your home? (2 points)
- → Do you get outside for a few minutes most days? (2 points)
- → Do you remove your shoes when you enter your home? (2 points)

For each NO answer you provide add the assigned points to your score. For YES answers, you get zero points.

- → Do you use fabric softener or dryer sheets in your home? (3 points)
- → Do you use commercial, 'non-natural' shampoos? (3 points)
- → Do you utilize over the counter meds (like Tylenol or Ibuprofen) 2 or more times a month? (3 points)
- → Do you use commercial air fresheners, scented candles, or other artificial fragrances in your home? (3 points)
- → Do you wear commercial make up most days? (3 points)
- → Do you use non-natural cleaners in your home? (3 points)
- → Do you wear scented lotions, perfumes, cologne, or other artificial fragrances? (3 points)
- → Do you use Teflon non-stick pans frequently? (3 points)

Total Score for Natural Living: ____/ 30 points

~

PILLARS 4 & 5: SLEEP WELL & STRESS LESS

For each YES answer you provide add the assigned points to your score. For NO answers, you get zero points.

- → Do you get 7+ hours of sleep most nights? (5 points)
- → Do you go to bed before 11 PM most nights? (4 points)
- → Can you fall asleep easily and stay asleep most nights? (4 points)
- → Do you feel like you are able to manage everyday stress well? (4 points)
- → Do you make time for fun, leisure, and friends every week? (3 points)
- → Do you enjoy (for the most part) what you do for a living? (Note: I consider being a 'stay at home parent' a living.) (5 points)
- → Do you feel excited for the projects and plans you have for the future? (3 points)
- → Do you consider yourself a generally happy person? (2 points)

Total Score for Sleep & Stress: ____/ 30 points



Ever have that nightmare where you show up to school only to realize you forgot about the final exam?

To complete the nightmare I always end up handing back a blank paper to the teacher. You know, right before she draws a big red "F" on my forehead and my classmates point and laugh.

Embarrassment. Panic. Fear. Hopelessness. It's amazing how many emotions can torture you during what should be your hours of rest.

Luckily, this is not that nightmare.

Yesterday's Personal Health Assessment is not your final exam. Your score does not determine your value as a human being. There will be no notice to your parents or red marks on your forehead. Even if you scored zero, you are still on the right path. So let's take a look at your score.

We're going to focus on each pillar individually. Why? Because even if you're doing really well in three of the four parts, a low number in any one category can still mess up your overall health.

Your results are in:

Look at your score for each category (Eat Real, Move Often, Live Naturally, and Sleep Well/Stress Less) and locate your current standing:

28+ points: Um, awesome! Keep it up, Tiger.

23+ points: Not too shabby, but there's definitely room for improvement.

18 points or lower: This area needs attention. Let's get to work.

Turning Weaknesses Into Strengths

This book outlines the basics of each pillar, but that's not to say you can't create your own personalized game plan based on your assessment score and goals. Here's what I want you to do:

Step 1: Keep it simple for the first 3 weeks.

Take the next 3 weeks to simply soak in each day's lesson as outlined in this book. Whether the information is totally new or old news, just keep at it. One day at a time. Read. Soak it in. Don't overthink it.

Remember, it's just 15 minutes a day.

Step 2: Dig deeper with the provided "Extra Reading" materials.

After you finish the first 3 weeks, I want you to go back to the sections where you need help. You can still spend just 15 minutes a day if that's all you got, but this time I want you to take some time reading the "Extra Reading & Resources" provided at the bottom of each day's lesson.

I've selected my favorite and most useful articles to help you get a better handle on the information. Use your dedicated time each day to go through any extra readings for the categories you need help with.

Step 3: Healthy Habits Action Plans

Each pillar in this book ends with a "Healthy Habits" action plan. Start with just one action item at a time. Work on that habit until it feels natural, then move on to the next action item. Keep at it until your weaker categories are super strong... just like you.

That's it! Easy as 1, 2, 3.

If you are willing to commit to 15 minutes a day you will notice a huge difference in no time.

Hope. Excitement. Energy. Joy.

It's amazing what you can feel when you dedicate just 15 minutes a day to your health and happiness.

Depending on where you are in your personal health journey it may take 3 weeks, it may take a few months. But the point is you do not have to turn your whole life into "crazy health nut" mode to finally realize the changes you desire. Get ready. The real lessons begin in the next chapter. Huzzah!



PILLAR ONE: EAT REAL

Okay, it's pop quiz time!

I'm going to throw some words your way. You tell me if they are good or bad. Easy, right? Aaaaand...Go!

Smoking. (Duh, bad.)
Long walks on the beach. (Goooood.)
Jumping off a cliff. (Really bad.)
A good night's rest. (Yes, please.)
Doing drugs. (Just say "no.")

You're doing awesome! Okay, last one:

Food. (.....uh....)

Food is good, right? I mean, you can't live without it. So yes, food is definitely good. But what if I said, 'junk food.' Well.... then it's bad. You got this. Easy. But what if I said something like: Low-fat milk? Gluten? Raw kale? Soy? Canola oil?

Things start to get tricky. Fast.

What if I start throwing words at you like: 'Paleo,' 'vegan,' or 'raw food diet'? Is your head spinning yet? I haven't even started. I mean, do you follow WAPF, AIP, or VEG?

Maybe you should sit down.

If you aren't confused by what to eat it's either because you are living in a cave or you already have a solid idea of what you think a healthy diet is. Either way, congrats! You are one of the few lucky peeps who isn't left scratching their head each time the newest nutritional study comes out that proves the last study was wrong. So... what should you eat?

That is the ultimate question.

People now days are left to either sift through the minutia of nutritional dogma while trying to make sense of all the contradicting information, OR they are left to just sit back and believe sleek marketing tactics that are putting their health in the hands of money mongers.

Can I tell you what you should do?

Take a ride on a time machine, man.

No, really. Consider these simple facts:

Mankind has been around for a very, very long time. Nutritionists, food science, and the idea of 'dieting'.... not so much.

Ultimately food can be very simple. And that's good because food, the right food, real food, is super duper important. (Yes, I said, "duper.") Food is more than calories. It's more than energy. Food nourishes our body. It repairs cells. It makes us who we are.

Back to the quiz:

Real food? It's good. Very good. Junk food, fake food, and man-made food is bad. It's killing us. Sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. If you want to see the biggest change in your health you have to approach food the right way.

So what do I mean by real food? I mean food that isn't overly processed. Food that isn't full of man-made ingredients, artificial colorings, or unnatural preservatives. I'm talking about wholesome, nourishing food. Food that heals.

Food that satisfies. Food that makes you feel good. Food that people have been eating for thousands of year.

I am NOT talking about eating cardboard or salads every day. I am NOT asking you to never enjoy a delicious piece of cake.

I mean, that's not a happy way to live.

I for one think healthy means happy. So don't think you have to hate meal time in the name of health. Real food is actually yummy. *Really.*

Today's Homework

I want you to take a good, honest look at your diet. What does a typical day look like for you food wise? Do you eat three solid meals a day? Are you always snacking? What cravings do you have a hard time letting go? Do you stress about calories? Do you feel guilty when you eat something 'bad'? What is your idea of 'healthy' eating?

Take a few minutes and write it down. I'll wait.

(doo, dee, daaaaa...)

You done? Good! I want you to hold on to that list because we're going to need it for the next few days as I start discussing real food: What to eat, what to avoid, and how to stick with it.

Below you'll find some "Extra Reading & Resources" that you can read now or after you finish the first 3 weeks.

Extra Reading & Resources

Why food is more than calories
Which diet is best?
Decoding food labels

<u>Is it healthy or not? Pinterest lies and other foolish things.</u>



What if I told you that you can eat whatever you want!

Guess what? You can!

That, in a nutshell, is what Michael Pollan calls, "<u>The Omnivore's Dilemma</u>." There's really nothing stopping you from stuffing your face full of doughnuts, candy, or cheesecake.

Of course, just because you can eat something, doesn't mean you should. Take rat poison, for example. The real dilemma, then, is knowing what to eat for optimal health. Tomorrow we're going to cover all the amazing, varied, and super delicious real food options you should eat (and enjoy). But today we're first going to focus on the things you should NOT eat.

For the sake of our 'simplicity pack,' I'm not going to dump a bunch of evidence and research on you. I've done my homework so you don't have to. BUT, for those of you who need the proof (like me), you can read the "Extra Reading & Resources" to get all the dirt... er, research you need.

Warning: The following items are NOT food.

Rather than list off the seemingly countless food-like products parading in your local grocery store as actual food, we can really simplify the do NOT eats by avoiding foods that fall into any of the following categories.

~THE OBVIOUS 'NO' FOODS~

Artificial Ingredients (Sweeteners, food dyes, preservatives, etc.)

Artificial ingredients are not food. These foods have been linked to things like cancer, hyperactivity, nerve damage, and more. And they are everywhere. For example: Kid's cereal, candies, baked goods, condiments, boxed mixes, and even things as seemingly innocent as vitamins and fruit snacks.

We are bombarded with man-made chemicals and our bodies don't deal with them very well.

You must learn to read labels... or better yet, buy things that don't require labels. Sure, the occasional treat isn't going to kill you, but helping yourself to a bowl of fruity loops each morning could be doing more damage than you know. (That last sentence just made kid Robin cry. I sure loved my fruity loops.)

I probably sound a little dramatic, but I can't stress how unnatural these chemicals are. That's why so many of the artificial ingredients still lurking in U.S. foods are banned in other countries. Do yourself a favor, skip them.

Unnatural 'Low-Fat' Products

I am SO thrilled that more people are learning how essential fat is (even saturated fat and cholesterol). Still, there are lots of people who can't seem to shake the idea that skim milk is better than whole. Or that low-fat cheese is healthy.

Here's the simple truth: If something is naturally full of fat (yogurt, for example), taking that fat out means it needs more sugar, chemicals, and/or processing before it lands on the grocery store shelf.

Real raw milk: Simple. Skim milk: Highly processed.

To add salt to the wound, low fat milk is actually making you fatter! Do yourself a favor, go for full fat. Whether you're buying milk, yogurt, cheese, or whatever. Full fat foods taste better than their processed counterparts, and they are WAY better for you.

Vegetable Oils

They sound so innocent. After all, no matter what diet you believe in, pretty much everyone agrees that vegetables are good for you. But vegetable oils are highly processed, totally unnatural, rancid, and just plain BAD. In fact, the rise of vegetable oils has perfectly mirrored the rise in heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes.

So much for 'heart healthy.'

The other huge problem with vegetable oils is that they are hiding in *everything*. Find any processed food (even in your 'health' food store), turn the package over and you'll very likely see things like: Soybean oil, Sunflower Oil, Canola Oil, etc. (And organic vegetable oils are only slightly less offensive than the conventional stuff.)

I think one of the simplest changes people can make that brings about the most drastic results for their health is ditching these fake oils. This also means rethinking the whole 'salad is healthy' mentality as almost all commercial salad dressings are full of vegetable oils (as well as high fructose corn syrup and other fake ingredients).

Salads can be great, just opt for making your own dressing. (It's easy, promise!)

We'll talk a little more about what to replace vegetable oils with tomorrow, but for the record: High quality olive oil is still a good choice that's been around for a long time.

Genetically Modified Foods

Genetically modified foods are foods where the actual DNA has been changed. GMOs are still pretty new and are banned in many countries. Sadly, in the United States they are legal and on the loose.

Despite indications that GMOs are really bad for our health, the most frightening thing is that there is no labeling requirements here in the U.S. Apparently, we don't have the right to know what's in our food.

The most common GMO crops include soy, corn, and canola (rapeseed) oil, which mean that roughly 90% of processed foods contain GMO ingredients. There is still a lot of research to be done about the actual safety of GMOs, but sadly our nation has chosen to use its citizens as science experiments rather than play it safe. I for one choose to avoid GMOs by staying away from processed foods and buying organic as much as possible.

What do these 'NO' foods have in common?

They are all highly processed. That's why the best thing you can do for your health is to go 'Granny Style' and cook your meals from scratch. Sounds laborious, doesn't it? It really doesn't have to be!

Grill some chicken that's been marinated in coconut oil and lemon juice. Sprinkle it with salt and pepper. Add steamed broccoli (slathered in butter, yum!) and a baked sweet potato and you're good to go. Simple and easy.

I'll share some more easy (and budget friendly) tips to help you make over your diet in the next few days. Get excited. It's not as hard as you think!

~THE NOT-SO-OBVIOUS 'NO' FOODS~

Beyond processed food-like products, there may be other foods you should avoid. With the rise of processed foods and our increasingly toxic world, many people are discovering they have intolerances or full-blown-allergies to certain foods.

If, after ditching processed foods, you find you still struggle with consistent headaches, bloating, gas, upset stomach, acne, etc. you may want to consider an elimination diet.

This is where you take away certain foods from your diet for a short period of time to see if your issues improve. Some culprit foods include:

→ Gluten

- → Grains
- → Dairy
- → Eggs

There are others, but theses are the most common.

Note: Just because your neighbor seems way better ditching dairy, eggs, or whatever, doesn't mean YOU need to. Listen to your body. If there is no indication of an issue with these otherwise healthy foods, don't feel like you have to let them go just because it seems trendy.

For an elimination diet: Remove any suspected 'offending' ingredient from your diet for two weeks. Notice how you feel. Really pay attention, write it down. Then reintroduce the food and see if your symptoms come back. Be sure to only eliminate one food at a time when working on an elimination diet or else you won't know what's safe and what's not.

Now, don't go throwing all your food out just yet. First we need to fill your fridge and pantry with delicious real food so you don't starve. Stay tuned for tomorrow's lesson.

Extra Reading & Resources

Just say 'NO' to artificial food dyes

Why I stay away from low fat milk

<u>Is aspartame dangerous?</u>

The dirty secret about vegetable oils

What's really in a McDonald's hamburger?

Genetically modified foods: What you need to know.

3 'health' foods to avoid

Processed Free: A real food guide to healthy eating

Gluten intolerance symptoms: What's really going on?



I remember one day during my freshman year of college when my roommate and I made a spontaneous trip to the grocery store. She wanted chocolate. I wanted cookies.

I came home with a box of these delightful shortbread, cream-filled, and totally processed cookies.

The box was empty within an hour.

It's actually really embarrassing to admit. This was not a daily occurrence for me. Hardly. But man, most days I *could* have done the same thing if I didn't practice diligent discipline.

I had a major sugar bug. I always wanted something sweet... until I ate something sweet and then I wanted something salty. Crackers were my biggest downfall.

As a dance major I was pretty determined to eat healthy (obviously not every day... see above). I exercised a lot, danced 8 hours a day, and bought into the whole "if it says it's healthy, it must be" marketing ploy.

Looking back I realize just how many processed carbs I consumed on a daily basis. To make matters worse I had a roommate who convinced me fat was bad. And since I wasn't really into 'cooking' I ate very little protein.

Now I know why I was always craving fast carbs! I was overfed but seriously undernourished.

Fast forward ten years. The cravings finally disappeared after I got my hands on some common sense nutritional wisdom: **Eat real food.**

Find it from a farmer, forage it, or grow it yourself. Skip it if it came out of factory... or even worse, a laboratory.

So what exactly does it mean to 'eat real food'? Let's break things down a little more, while still keeping things simple.

~THE YES FOODS~

There are only three macronutrients: Fats, carbohydrates, and proteins. For whatever reasons, one of these guys always seems to be really unpopular at any given time.

For a long time it was fat. Currently there is an anti-carb clique.

Now, I love science as much as the next nerd, but seeing how quickly (and sometimes simultaneously) scientific studies can do a 180, I try to use common sense when it comes to food. I mean, my great-great-great-grandpa didn't need a nutrition degree to live a vibrant, healthy, long life.

He just ate real food!

When I see that there are only 3 macronutrients, I tend to think they are all important. Sure, there are bad fats, bad carbs, and even bad proteins. (Hint: They all seem to come from a factory!) The key, then, is filling your plate with the good kind of all three.

Good Fat

Hopefully you aren't afraid of fats. If you need convincing on why these are essential to good health, please read the extra reading below. Otherwise I'm just going to tell you: Your body needs fat. Good fat. Real fat. (And yes, that includes saturated fats and cholesterol.)

Your Best Options for Fat:

- → Extra Virgin Olive Oil (Cold Pressed)
- → Coconut Oil
- → Butter
- → Ghee (Clarified Butter)
- → Palm Oil (But please only purchase if it was sustainably harvested!)
- → Tallow (Beef Fat)
- → Lard (Make sure it's not hydrogenated!)
- → Avocados
- → Nuts (Although keep nuts to a small handful each day to keep your Omega 3/6 ratios good. That means you don't want to over do nut butters or nut flours, too.)

The great thing about real fats is that they tend to be really filling. They pack more caloric punch than their other macro friends, so a little goes a long way. If you cut out processed foods I find your body will really tell you how much of what to eat. Just listen.

Important note about fat: When consuming fats, particularly animal fats, it's best to buy organic if you can budget it. Our bodies store toxins in the fat as a protective mechanism. That means pesticides, antibiotics, and hormones from conventional animal feed/treatments is lurking in conventional butter, meats, or lard.

Grass fed, pasture raised, and locally sourced foods are your best options. Yes, they are more expensive, and I realize for some people it's just not an option. If that's you, don't stress about it. You're still going to be better off eating real food instead of McDonald's.

If you can make it work, though, opt for the best quality when it comes to fats. Think about how much money you'll save by not buying all that processed food that just leaves you hungry. Or consider how much you'll save in medical costs.

It's really about prioritizing your health. The money, if you have it, is worth it.

Protein

Protein is really important if you want to live a vibrant, radiant life. There is a lot of debate about the perfect amount of protein you need. Some will say it's a lot, others will say you need very little. I say: Listen to your body.

Sure, that's a little simplistic, but I find that when I'm eating real food that sometimes I have very serious protein cravings, and barely any at other times. I also find that I feel best when I listen to those cravings.

(Note: If you're eating processed foods, it's hard to trust your body's signals as some additives in those foods are actually designed to be addictive. Eating real food is the answer to beat those cravings once and for all.)

Quality complete proteins include:

- → Chicken, Beef, Turkey, Pork, etc.
- → Fish like salmon, shrimp, cod, or lobster.
- → Eggs (eat the yolks, too!)
- → Whole fat dairy products (preferably raw or fermented)

Other proteins from things like beans, lentils, and other plant-based proteins are good additions to your diet (especially if you avoid animal products or are on a budget). Without going into the whole 'complete vs. incomplete' protein saga, it is important to note that if you don't consume any animal products then you may want to work with a nutritionist who can tailor a program just for you to ensure you're getting all the vital nutrients you need.

Carbohydrates

Right now there is a lot of debate about what kind of carbs you should eat, how many carbs to consume, and even when to eat those carbs. I could write a whole book about the science of carbohydrates: Complex vs. simple, how they affect our hormones, blood sugar, etc. etc.

The truth is, there are tons of books already out there, each loaded with their own scientific backings. I've read a lot of them. And each time I'm left more confused because each book seems to contradict the preceding one.

So, what's my take on carbs? In a nutshell: You need them.

Sure, your body can burn fat instead of carbs. But glucose is still your body's first choice for easy, fast energy. I find, that as long as I'm eating real food (so no high fructose corn syrup, refined white sugars, etc.) and getting enough good fat and protein that my carb cravings are spot on for what my body needs.

Quality Carbohydrates

- → Lots and lots of vegetables, eat up!
- → Fresh fruit
- → Starchy veggies likes potatoes
- → White rice (It's much easier to digest than brown rice)
- → Grains (For easier digestion I suggest either freshly ground grains, sprouted grains, or fermented grains like sourdough bread. For some people, avoiding gluten or grains altogether may be best.)
- → Beans (For easier digestion, soaking beans is recommended.)
- → Natural sweeteners in moderation (Honey, maple syrup, rapadura, coconut sugar, etc.)

Note: If possible, I recommend buying organic produce to avoid higher pesticide exposure, especially for foods where you are eating the skin. If money is an issue, consider buying organic for foods found on the Dirty Dozen list (<u>found here</u>), as these are the food highest in pesticides.

If money is really tight, I'd still opt for organic fatty foods first before purchasing produce organically. Do what you can and don't stress too much. Again: Eating real food, even conventionally grown, is still WAY better for you than eating processed foods.

Nutrient Dense Foods

I find that when my diet is 80-90% unprocessed, (meaning: I generally don't buy or keep anything processed in my home but allow for some flexibility for eating out once a week or visiting family/friends), that I'm simply more satisfied, have more energy, deal with less illness, have clearer skin, and can maintain a weight that feels right for me. That's because real food is much more nutrient dense than processed food, especially if the diet is balanced with quality fats, proteins, and carbs.

I still sometimes supplement with some nutrient dense 'superfoods' to make up for that other 10 - 20% and for the fact that our soil is much more 'nutrient depleted' due to conventional farming practices and general environmental pollution.

If the idea of 'eating real food' is totally new, I wouldn't stress too much about supplementation just yet. Just start switching out your diet for whole, clean, real foods. For those of you who are ready for the next level, check out my 'Supplements & Superfoods' recommendations here.

Making the Change to Real Food

Now that we've covered the basic 'good foods to eat,' I'm guessing some of you are feeling a little overwhelmed right now. Don't be!

Here's a simple, 3 step guide to get your going:

- 1. Pick 1 to 3 'NO' foods that you are willing to give up now.
- 2. Pick 1 to 3 'YES' foods that you can add to your diet.
- 3. Stay with those simple changes until they feel normal. Then repeat the process again.

See? You can do this! You don't need to do a complete 180 right away. I find that people who try to change everything all at once get frustrated and give up. Small steps will create new habits. New habits will change your world. Just give it time.

I've left you oodles and oodles of extra reading and resources below. If you are ready for a more thorough investigation into stocking your home with nutrient dense real food goodness, then have at it! Otherwise, just keep it simple and change one thing at a time.

Extra Reading & Resources

Stocking your real food pantry
Real food simplified
5 common real food mistakes
How to menu plan
The case for organic food
Real food for busy people
Why your body needs fat
Is meat healthy?
Is sugar bad?



HEALTHY HABITS: EAT REAL

Let me ask you:

Do you think twice about how you put your pants on in the morning? Or how you walk up stairs? Or how to wash your hands?

I'm guessing the answer is: NO. At this point, those things are second nature. As a parent, however, I've learned to appreciate my ability to do such simple tasks as I've watched my kids struggle to learn those basic things for the first time. Heck, there are even times when I feel like I have to relearn simple things like walking up the stairs after an injury or illness.

That's how healthy living is.

Whether you are a brand new to the concept or recovering from a case of 'falling off the bandwagon,' taking (or re-taking) those first few steps can feel scary, uncomfortable, and full of "but what if I fall?" fears.

For some, healthy eating is just as natural as putting on your pants. It doesn't seem odd to refuse junk food or eat a plate full of colorful veggies. It doesn't require food logs, daily weigh-ins, or friendly competitions. It's just second nature.

The good news is that everyone can get to that familiar, comfortable place. That's why I've created the "Healthy Habits" action plan for each of the areas covered in this course. I want to help you take that first step, and then your second, and onward until walking that healthy walk is a no-brainer.

You know the cliche: It all starts with a single step. You just need to take action.

For the "Eat Real" pillar there are 7 action steps found on the next page. Please note that I'm not asking for perfection. I believe a healthy life leaves a little wiggle room for celebrations, eating with friends (who maybe aren't where you are diet-wise), etc.

With that said, don't let your mentality of "perfection doesn't matter" slip into a false sense of healthy eating while maintaining bad habits the majority of the time. Be forgiving, but be honest.

I recommend starting with #1 and working your way down. The first step in each of these "Healthy Habits" action plans are what I consider as having the biggest impact with the least amount of effort.

Beyond the first step, just take it one step at a time. Don't go any faster than you need. You are looking for lasting habit changes, not quick fixes.

When you complete an action item, celebrate! Get a massage, take a nice long walk, buy an outfit, or just 'hug it out' with a friend. Once you've completed all 8 steps be proud of the journey you've taken no matter how long it took.

Progress is really awesome. You are really awesome.



STEP ONE:

Aim to cook all but 1 - 3 of your meals at home each week. This will save you money and help you avoid eating garbage ingredients that are usually lurking in most restaurant foods. If you eat out a lot, start slow by replacing one 'out' meal for one 'in' meal each week and work from there.

I firmly believe meal planning is the easiest way to make healthy eating a habit. It saves you time, money, and stress.

More importantly, if you use a trustworthy meal planner, it makes the whole "is it healthy" question a non-issue. My family uses a meal plan subscription service that plans all our meals, organizes my shopping list, and makes healthy eating a no-brainer. Click here to hear my story and see what I recommend.

STEP TWO:

Pull out all your boxed or wrapped foods in your home and read the ingredients for each item. Become aware of any hidden 'NO' foods that are lurking in your food. Next time you go grocery shopping, read labels and see if you can find better alternatives to those foods with the most offensive ingredients.

STEP THREE:

Replace your vegetable oils (like Canola oil) with coconut oil, olive oil, butter, ghee, tallow, or lard (make sure it's not hydrogenated). When baking, these traditional fats can almost always replace industrial fats without any changes in your recipes.

STEP FOUR:

Replace processed crackers, cookies, sodas, and other 'snacks' with things like pre-cut veggies and homemade hummus, nuts, fruit, full fat plain yogurt sweetened with honey, organic popcorn cooked in coconut oil, jerky, or other real food snacks. It's easier to keep the bad out if you bring in the good first.

STEP FIVE:

Work toward at least 5 servings of vegetables and fruits a day by adding just one extra daily serving each week. Remember, there is no rule that says you can't eat more than five!

STEP SIX:

If possible, buy organic for fatty animal products (meats and dairy) and/or 'dirty dozen' produce items. If your budget is really tight, consider how you can save by eating out less, buying less processed foods, etc. Don't forget the money you'll save on medical care. If buying organic is not an option, buy more food from the 'clean 15' list and leaner cuts of meats that are lower in toxins.

STEP SEVEN:

Consider supplementing your diet with some nutrient dense superfoods. Check out my recommended list and consider adding one supplement each month according to what you feel your diet might need. You can find the list here.



PILLAR TWO: MOVE OFTEN

Tell me. How do you feel when you hear the word "exercise"?

Do you jump up and down as you grab your shoes and dash to the gym?

OR do you find yourself slumping into a pile of guilt and frustration as you mumble something like, "Sure... I work out... you know, when I can"?

Here's the thing: I really hate the word, "exercise." That may come as a surprise to anyone who knows me. I mean, I love to move. I have two degrees in dance. I'm a movement therapist and certified movement analyst. I yearn for hardwood floors where I can dance and do yoga.

"Moving," as Buddy the Elf would say, "is my favorite." So what's my beef with the term, "exercise?" Exercise is such a limiting view of our body's potential for movement.

The idea of exercise has produced this world of militant practices, body shaming, and guilt-ridden rain clouds that loom over the heads of people who feel too busy to go to the gym.

To be clear: I have nothing against those who love to exercise. Even though I prefer a different term, I like exercising. Whether you're into weight training, running, Zumba, biking, CrossFit, yoga, or whatever... if you have a dedicated exercise program that you enjoy then I applaud you.

You are doing something wonderful for you body.

The research is clear: Exercise has been shown to keep heart disease, diabetes, and a host of other diseases at bay. Those who exercise and move

consistently have better blood work, more balanced hormones, sleep better, feel better, and... yes, look better.

Beyond toned butts and defined abs, however, moving throughout the day will make you feel awesome.

That's because your body is designed to move. It's in your very makeup. And the good news is: You don't have to 'work out' in order to be healthy. In fact, the idea of 'working out' is really new.

Yep. Just like processed food, which didn't exist a 100 or so years ago, back in the day people didn't dedicate 30 minutes of their day to 'exercising.'

That's the good news. But here's the bad news:

Your ancestors also didn't spend the majority of their day in front of a computer, sitting in chairs.

From our Paleo Parents to our Friendly Farmers, until recent history mankind spent their days moving. Hunting, gathering, building, gardening, farming, etc. There was lots of moving going on before the invention of cubicles and nine to five shifts.

Now, if you are a victim to office spaces, don't stress. Whether you like exercising or not, there are options to keep your muscles, mind, and everything in between happy.

Today's Homework

I want you to take an honest look at your typical day. How often do you workout? How intense? How often are you sitting or being sedentary? How do you feel about exercise in general?

Then think beyond just 'exercise' and think about movement. Think about your body. Think about your posture, chronic pain, or body image issues. Think

about all of it and write down your overall thoughts on how you're doing in the realm of physical health.

Write it down. Yes, now. I'll pause for a minute until you're ready.

(pause)

You good? Great.

Over the next few days we'll discuss a lot of ways to get moving more and moving *better*. Until then, get all your excuses ready because we're going to nip 'em in the bud for good. And remember: Even if you hate the idea of 'exercise,' I promise there are ways for you to enjoy moving more.

Extra Reading & Resources

Somatics: A different approach to fitness & health

Five minute morning moving ritual

Why exercise matters

The two big problems with exercise (and what to do about them)



IF YOU DON'T LOVE IT, YOU WON'T DO IT.

Can I ask you a personal question?

What's your type?

No, I don't really care if you prefer brunettes over blondes. I want to know your exercise type. Do you enjoy going to classes? Working out with a friend? Exercising by yourself? Working with a personal trainer? Do you yoga, CrossFit, or run? Lift weights, dance, or shoot some hoops? Bike, play tag, or...

You get the idea. There are lots of different exercise types out there. And that's because there are so many ways to exercise. The real key is finding something that you love. If you don't know your type, it's hard to fall in love with exercise at all. And if you don't love it, you probably won't stick with it.

Some lucky ducks have already found their type. If this is you, congrats! I hope you have a life full of happiness with your workout.

For those who haven't found their exercise true love yet, it can be hard. Those who have found 'the one' tend to share their love with everyone. And I mean, everyone. Whether you care to hear their latest PR, witness another marathon completed, or see their most recent yoga victory, those who are deeply smitten with their current workout love to flaunt it.

Can I give you a word of advice: Don't be a hater.

Instead, let their passion fuel your search for *your* perfect type. Don't feel like you have to buy a gym membership or squeeze into little running shorts to keep up with your neighbors. If you want to make exercise a part of your life, you need to find what works for *you*.

Ultimately, from a conditioning perspective, it is important that you find ways to work on cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance, strength, flexibility, and body connectivity. But if you are still just trying to get into the habit of working out, I want you to forget those things.

In my experience, as you develop a habit and love for moving the other stuff comes. So for now, let's keep this exercise thing simple: Set aside at least 20 - 30 minutes for dedicated exercise, at least 5 times a week.

What you do is up to you. I just want you to get into the habit of making time to move with some level of intensity. If you've never exercised a day in your life start really slow. Take a short walk and work on increasing your time. Walking is really the best exercise in terms of your overall health.

If walking bores you, I've got a big ol' list here of other ideas:

- → Aerobics
- → Basketball
- → Biking
- → Chasing kids
- → CrossFit
- → Dancing
- → Football
- → Frisbee
- → Gardening
- → Game of Tag
- → Golfing
- → High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)
- → Hiking
- → Jogging
- → Jump Rope
- → Kick boxing
- → Moderate housework
- → Pilates
- → Racquetball

- → Rock Climbing
- → Rowing
- → Running
- → Skating
- → Skiing
- → Soccer
- → Softball or Baseball
- → Surfing
- → Tae kwon do
- → Tai chi
- → Tennis
- → Volleyball
- → Walking
- → Water Aerobics
- → Weight Lifting
- → Yoga
- → Zumba

Give me at least 20 minutes (aim for 30 if you're doing something really low intensity) every day and you're on the road to becoming an exercise fiend!

If you aren't sure what you love, pick something from the list and try it. As I tell my little girl at the dinner table (quoting Daniel Tiger, of course): "You got to try new things because they might taste good!"

So... will you give exercise a chance?

Decide now what works best for your schedule. No matter how busy you are I bet there is at least 20 minutes you can find in your day. If you have time for Facebook, blogs, or television then you definitely have time for exercise. Start today. Get on that exercise lovin' train and get ready to feel better than ever.

For those who already exercise: Make sure you tune in for tomorrow's message because it's for everyone. Exercise is only *part* of the 'Move Often' pillar.

Extra Reading & Resources

10 reasons NOT to do crunches
Core strengthening exercises
Getting started with some favorite fitness programs
5 rules for working out
(VIDEO) Fun tabata style HIIT workout



DON'T GET CAUGHT IN THIS TRAP

Hey, you may want to sit down for what I'm about to tell you.

Are you sitting?

sigh Okay. Here it is:

Too much sitting is killing you... even if you exercise.

Eeeek! Stand up. Stand up!

All joking aside, the truth is that our sedentary world has a major impact on our health.

In 2015 a study was published in the *Journal Annals Of Internal Medicine* titled: <u>Sedentary Time and Its Association With Risk for Disease Incidence, Mortality, and Hospitalization in Adults.</u> And if the length of that title doesn't haunt you, the findings will:

Researchers looked at 47 studies examining the relationship between sitting and mortality. They found that people who sit for long periods were at a much higher risk for dying from various diseases like cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Keep in mind that even if you exercise every day, if the rest of your day is spent sitting down you are still at risk for all the health ills associated with too much sitting. Yikes.

Enough of the bad news. Let's turn that frown upside down and consider the good news: The solution is simple.

Get up and move.

Whether you have a desk job or just tend to get sucked into computer time a little too much, you don't have to throw your chair and desk away just yet. (Unless of course the chair is killing your back.)

Simple Tips for Sedentary Folks

Take every opportunity to move: Park your car further away. Take the stairs. Walk to your co-worker instead of emailing or calling them. Move, baby, move. Not sure how? Here are some ideas:

1. Set an alarm for hourly breaks.

For those who spend a lot of time at a computer, set your phone's alarm to go off every hour. When it goes off, get up and move for at least 5 - 10 minutes. Walk, stretch, and twist. Doing mild backbends and extending your hip flexors are particularly good remedies for sitting too much. And if you're worried about getting your work done, remember that studies have shown that those who take small, frequent breaks are actually more productive.

2. Consider getting a fitness tracker.

<u>FitBit</u> and <u>Jawbone</u> are just two options to track your daily steps. <u>Google Fit</u> is another option that's totally free. Aim to get 10,000 steps in each day in addition to your daily workout.

3. Check in with your alignment.

As you consider working on being less sedentary, don't forget that *how* you sit matters. Check out the extra reading for some great information to help you deal with tension, back pain, and other things that come from sitting poorly.

Why don't you get up right now and take a little walk. I promise, your body will thank you.

Extra Reading & Resources

Basics of sitting: Part 1
Basics of sitting: Part 2
Basics of sitting: Part 3

3 simple stretches for better posture

Back pain? Could be your chair

Creeping neck syndrome: How to remedy Relieve neck & shoulder tension for good 30 second stretch to feel better instantly

A simple fix for a healthier back

Posture fix to lose 10 pounds "instantly"



HEALTHY HABITS: MOVE OFTEN

I like to move it, move it.
I like to move it, move it.
I like to....

Oh. Hello.

Today I have the "Healthy Habits" action plan for the Move Often pillar. This plan has seven action steps. Start with Step #1. Remember, I always put what I think is the "most impactful" habit on top. It may not be the easiest, but it gives you the most bang for your buck.

From there, move on to the other habits. Implement each new habit for 1 - 2 weeks. Keep it going and then add the next step. Ultimately I want you doing all of these steps every day/week. Most of them are short and sweet and only require a couple minutes of your day.

As you begin turning these steps into habits you'll find that you are moving more without sacrificing a lot of time. You'll also find you are more productive, experience less back pain and stiffness, and just feel... well, awesome.

After all, that is the whole point of this book.



STEP ONE:

Take some time each day to check in with your posture (or as I prefer to call it, your alignment). Alignment matters A LOT. More than you probably realize. Inflammation? Digestion issues? Nerve pain? These are just some of the consequences of poor alignment.

If you really want to see lasting changes, I highly recommend checking out my <u>Inside Out</u> program. It's designed to unravel bad habits and restore your natural movement patterns. With a focus on development movement, I've worked with countless individuals to help them master their movement and find grace, confidence, and ease through this one of a kind training program.

This program will bring you the greatest changes in your body in terms of movement, alignment, and fitness. Do yourself a favor and just give it a look. You can learn more about it here.

STEP TWO:

Make a commitment to spend at least 5 minutes of your day focusing on deep breathing. As the foundation of healthy movement, this simple practice will strengthen your core, reduce stress, and clear your mind. Simply lie down on your back, get comfortable, and tune into your breath.

STEP THREE:

Set an alarm to go off for each hour you are sitting down. When it goes off, get up and take a 5 - 10 minute walking/stretching break.

STEP FOUR:

Take the 1 Mile Walking Test to gauge your aerobic fitness level. Then, find time to walk a little every day and dedicate a couple days a week to longer walks. Walking is great for the whole body. Take the test each week until you reach your goal. You can find the test here.

STEP FIVE:

Make a list of all the moving-type activities you love to do. Be creative. Try to do one thing from that list at least 5 days a week.

STEP SIX:

Take the Push-Up Fitness Test to gauge your strength. Then, try doing however many push-ups you can a couple times a week to improve your strength. Only do as many as you can while maintaining proper alignment (knees down or 'girl push-ups' are okay). Take the test each week until you reach your goal. You can find the test here.

STEP SEVEN:

Aim to do at least one high intensity type exercise each week. It's more about intensity than length of time. (For example: You could walk for 15 minutes and intersperse 2 or 3 all out sprints that each last only 30-60 seconds.) Get that heart rate up, but only for a short time. Be sure to cool down before stopping altogether.



PILLAR THREE: LIVE NATURALLY

I like to think of healthy living as a family.

The oldest child is, of course, Nutrition. He gets a lot of attention from the world. People are quick to rave about his ability to make everyone feel good. He's something of a rockstar.

The next child is Exercise. She doesn't get quite the same attention as Nutrition, as many people only notice her for 20 - 30 minutes a day... But still, people do adore everything she gives: Toned muscles, energy, stamina, etc. She is definitely a golden child for many.

Then there is the neglected child of healthy living.

It's not that she isn't as important as her older siblings... she just seems to get lost in the shadows of Nutrition and Exercise. Her name is Natural Living.

Those who get to know Natural Living can testify that she has some pretty great traits. I mean, she's kind of like a superhero who spends most of her time living a mild mannered existence. Most people don't look up to see her amazing abilities. Too often people only ask for her help after they get in trouble.

Today, I'm asking you to really get to know Natural Living.

"Non-toxic," "Green," and "Safe" are some of her nicknames. Her mission is to protect people from dangerous chemicals while simultaneously empowering people with the freedom that comes from non-toxic living.

The thing about toxic chemicals is that they have been linked to a LOT of bad things.

Cancer, ADHD, autism, and asthma are just some of the things linked to our toxic world. In fact, toxic chemicals may even be the reason for those unwanted pounds you can't seem to shake.

Did you know that federal regulation does not require chemicals to be tested or proven safe before manufacturers include them in consumer products? As a result, there is an ever growing list of products and chemicals found harmful to humans only after they have been released to the public.

The really bad news is that the standard home is littered with all sorts of dangerous toxins. And I'm not just talking about the obvious offenders like bug killer. Some of the most dangerous chemicals in your home are marketed with snuggling bears and fields of flowers.

Fabric softener, perfume, air freshener, scented candles.... they all are items full of things you probably don't want in your home.

But listen, it's not all bad news.

The goods news is that there are lots of really simple (and frugal) steps you can take to make your home safe. You do NOT have to turn into a flower-powered hippie who never showers. In fact, you can still smell nice, have soft laundry, and luscious hair all while living a non-toxic life.

Simple changes make a huge difference.

Natural Living will save you money and time all while protecting your health and the planet. You could say Natural Living will make a superhero out of you! In fact, I think you'll be amazed at how freeing and empowering living a natural life is.

Today's Homework

Make a list of all the products you use in a typical day. I'm talking toothpaste, cleaners, candles, etc. Start with your bathroom: What does your morning/evening routine require? Then move to the kitchen: What are your go-to cleaning products? Then consider the rest of your home: Laundry room, living room, bedroom, medicine cabinet, etc. Ladies, don't forget your purses: What products are in there that you pull out regularly? Don't worry too much about what's in the products, just name the things you use all the time.

I'll leave you to the list making, but I'll be back with lots of simple ideas to help you be safer and healthier.

Extra Reading & Resources

Are toxic chemicals making you fat?

Hidden toxins in your home

Reduce home toxins by 60% with this simple tip



I remember the day when my daughter came home from preschool and gave me a 5 minute lesson on germs. It went something like this:

"Mom, there are bad germs and there are good germs. Bad germs make us sick. Good germs help our bodies. I don't like bad germs. Bad germs are bad. Good germs are good."

Don't you love the simple logic of a preschooler?

The discovery of germs was a big deal. Lots of lives were saved when doctors started washing their hands. And following the industrial age, when sanitation wasn't super popular, the realization that you could kill germs changed history.

We've been on a killing rampage ever since.

I'm all for sterile environments in certain situations, but I'm not so sure we need to have an all-out war in our own kitchen so long as we're practicing good hygiene and supporting our immune system with real food. I especially question the wisdom of using cleaning products with warning labels that come with a host of unpleasant side effects.

Did you know that cleaning products are among the most toxic products in the home? If you read labels of some of the popular brands carefully you'll learn that you are supposed to rinse off surfaces after using them. For cleaning products. Seriously.

Take fabric softener for example. Some of the most harmful ingredients in dryer sheets and liquid fabric softener alike include benzyl acetate (linked to pancreatic cancer), benzyl alcohol (an upper respiratory tract irritant), ethanol

(linked to central nervous system disorders), limonene (a known carcinogen) and chloroform (a neurotoxin and carcinogen). That's just some of the chemicals you'll find in those bottles that promise fluffy towels.

Do you really think it's worth wasting your money on a product that can do so much damage?

I know what you're thinking, "But I really like having soft towels!" I get it. But instead of throwing money down the drain for toxic garbage, you could throw in a couple reusable wool dryer balls... Or a cup of white vinegar... Or some salt... Or... Or... Or...

There are lots of options!

And guess what? Not only are those options gentle on your wallet, they are also gentle on your health.

How to clean your home without killing your body:

Remember the list you made yesterday? You know, the one with all the products you use. Take it out and cross off the things you don't really need. For those items, declutter your life and stop using them! Just let them go. (And think of the money you'll save!)

Now circle the things you do need. Things like toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo, a basic all purpose cleaner, etc. For these items make the commitment to find safer alternatives.

Yes, that's it.

Of course, you'll need to decide how involved you want to be with the process of finding alternatives and detoxing your home. **For those on a budget** you can pretty much make anything you need with a few simple ingredients (vinegar, lemons, baking soda, castile soap, coconut oil, etc.) I've included a link to my free cleaning recipes from thankyourbody.com in the "Extra Reading & Resources" section below (you can also find it here).

For those with little time who are looking for convenience, may I recommend checking out Young Living. I started using Young Living's essential oils two years ago and fell in love. Since then I've fallen in love with their other non-oil products. From toothpaste to deodorant to laundry detergent to cleaners to beauty products. It's a one-stop shop for non-toxic products. Read how to make the simple switch to non-toxic products here.

For those somewhere in between being a DIY-Diva or a Convenient-Carla you can pick and choose what you want to make and what you want to buy. The key is to find what works for *you*. Baby steps, my friend.

Finally, don't forget that you don't need to change everything at once.

Next time something runs out, just don't buy it again. Find a recipe or a safer product. Slowly build your natural cleaning cabinet. You're going to love how clean your home will feel without smelling like a chemical factory.

There are more ideas for you in the "Healthy Habits" action plan for Natural Living. For now, just give up the fabric softener and call it good. Saying "goodbye" will make you feel all snuggly and cuddly. Promise.

Extra Reading & Resources

Why you should ditch the fabric softener (and what to use instead)

Toxic free bathroom: 3 simple steps

<u>Toxic free kitchen: 3 simple steps</u>

3 ways to improve indoor air quality

All Natural Living Recipes from Thank Your Body

All Natural Living eBook by Robin Konie



WHAT'S HIDING IN YOUR BATHROOM?

Confession: I used to never go anywhere without makeup. And I mean *anywhere.*

In fact, I remember one Saturday morning during high school when a good friend made an early surprise visit to my house. I had just got dressed for the day, but still hadn't put any makeup on. When my friend showed up, I panicked. Even though this was a close, dear friend, I was terrified to show my face without makeup.

I guess you could say I had self image issues.

Most of my insecurities came from my stubborn acne. Makeup was a necessity in my mind. Don't even get me started on how hideous the thick layer of foundation actually made me look... *sigh*. Hindsight, right?

But even when my acne wasn't the issue, I still felt like makeup was a necessity. Blame it on the beauty industry, my friends, or just habit... it doesn't really matter. What matters is that you should know the truth about makeup.

And before all the dudes reading walk away, stop. This is not JUST about makeup.

The dirty secrets I'm about to share include items like deodorant, shampoo, shaving cream, cologne, etc. Men and women alike are bombarded with sleek marketing tactics aimed to get us to use not-so-healthy products on our body every single day. So keep reading, folks.

The Truth About The Products You Use

Did you know that there are NO safety standards and virtually NO restrictions for chemicals used in personal-care products?

Unlike with drugs, no safety reviews are required before these products hit a store near you. And no reporting requirements exist for any adverse reactions related to the use of these items. Instead, the cosmetics industry has been charged with monitoring its own products, which means most companies aren't doing a darn thing.

Many products on the market contain known carcinogens like formaldehyde, diethanolamine, and talc... and reproductive toxins like mercury, lead, and toluene... and hormone disruptors like phthalates and parabens.

Nasty stuff.

And like I said, it's not just makeup: Consider your shampoo.... Yes, there are known carcinogens in many shampoos, including *baby* shampoo.

But beyond avoiding toxic chemicals, commercial products are doing other bad stuff to your hair. Most commercial shampoos strip the scalp of its natural oils. The body, in its infinite wisdom, tries to balance itself back out by producing more oil. This of course translates into hair that gets really greasy really fast — a reason why most people feel like they need to wash their hair every day or two. Because they do. Because our shampoos are destroying our natural balance. The product we need to feel less greasy is making us... well, more greasy.

Embrace Natural Beauty

For those of you who love getting dolled up and wouldn't think about going without makeup, rest assured there are options. Three options, actually. You decide what option fits your life best, and remember that you can always mingle in and out of all three choices:

1. Make your own.

I have a ton of great all natural makeup and personal care recipes on my blog. Many are super simple and will require ingredients that you may already have in your pantry. Others may require a small investment in a few ingredients like beeswax, shea butter, and some essential oils. But still, the DIY realm will most likely be WAY cheaper than what you're spending on personal products now. And they are super safe. I've linked to my articles below (you can also view them here).

If you're totally new to the DIY world, just pick one and start there. I recommend starting with my deodorant recipe because it's easy, very effective, and you can switch it out without any problems. (Click here for the tutorial).

Please note: Natural hair care is a bit trickier than other care products. There will most likely be a detox period you'll have to endure before you love the results. I've posted some links below with more detail.

2. Buy with care. Support awesome companies.

There are some amazing natural products out there. Some of them are more expensive; others are cheaper than your toxic stuff. If you have more money than time, you may wish to buy instead of make.

For me, I still make a few items (like my deodorant), but with two small kids and a business, I have moved more into the "buy and support great companies" realm. I actually love that I get to vote with my dollar and help rid the world of toxic garbage one purchase at a time.

Because of that, I have some of my own personal favorites. You can also check out the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Database (<u>found here</u>). It's a really cool (and free) tool where you can search out many brands and see how they rate for safety.

Another note about hair care: While some people have great success with DIY hair stuff, if it's in your budget, I would recommend using Morrocco Method. Some DIY recipes are just really harsh on the scalp and some people never leave that detox period.

Morrocco Method didn't sponsor this recommendation (none of the brands I recommend here are sponsored), I just really trust their products. They were created by an actual hair expert. Their products go beyond my strict standards for natural hair care: They are raw, wildcrafted, vegan, and Paleo friendly. They are also the only products that cured my eternal dry scalp issues and my kids' cradle cap problems. I absolutely love and recommend them. Click here to visit their site.

3. Go without!

I probably wouldn't recommend skipping toothpaste or deodorant (although there are better alternatives than the commercial stuff!)... but when it comes to things like makeup, consider some time off.

I never imagined I could go without my makeup crutch. But one day I just decided to keep it off, even though I knew I was meeting up with friends. I realized that nobody cared if I was wearing makeup. I loved the extra time I had in the morning. I adored how my skin felt (not to mention that I've had clearer skin since ditching makeup). Plus, I was saving a *ton* of money.

But the best thing was that I finally learned to love my face. I truly feel more beautiful now than I did wearing makeup. Even if you don't go without makeup every day, consider taking a break and appreciating the natural, beautiful person you are!

Because you are beautiful.

Extra Reading & Resources

Environmental Working Group Skin Deep Cosmetics Database
Why you should ditch your shampoo
The all natural hair care guide
The dirty secret about natural hair care
How to keep your homemade beauty products safe
All Natural Living Recipes from Thank Your Body

All Natural Living eBook by Robin Konie Morrocco Method



Tell me, what do you do when you or someone in your family gets sick?

The medical world would have us believe that popping pills or throwing back some neon colored syrup is the answer. Now, I'm not against modern medicine... hardly. I think it has its time. If I'm hit by a car, for example, you better believe it's time to go to the hospital.

But if a cold hits, rather than popping pills, I try to choose natural remedies as my first line of defense.

Why I don't start with drugs.

Pharmaceuticals always have side effects. Always. Big Pharma can't patent anything natural, like herbs or essential oils. So drugs contain synthetic ingredients. When these foreign (unnatural) ingredients are introduced to your body, the body doesn't respond well.

There may be times when those side effects are worth the 'rewards' the drug provides. But for me, I will almost always choose a natural route first, and I find that's often all I need.

The Power of Nature

Mother Nature has provided many incredible resources to help keep our bodies healthy. Unfortunately, the FDA saves 'cures' for drugs. I can't (and won't) diagnose anyone (so please don't send me emails asking to for cures), nor can I make claims that things like real food, essential oils, or the like have any sort of medicinal properties.... even if there is evidence to support it.

What I can do is tell you what I do when I get sick, and what has worked for me and my family.

My natural medicine cabinet is full of essential oils, herbs, and real food, and I've witnessed some pretty awesome results from all three. Below you'll find links with my favorite natural remedies in the "Extra Reading & Resources" section. Some of them are so simple and use really frugal ingredients. Be sure to check it out!

Recently there has been a surge in interest about essential oils. I personally have been using essential oils for several years, but mostly in my cleaning products. I felt totally lost on how to incorporate essentials oils as part of a 'health protocol.'

After a lot of reading, research, and trial I now feel empowered to use essential oils as part of my approach to healthy living. I don't go crazy, and they have their limits, but I am glad they are in my medicine cabinet as they have 'saved the day' on a number of occasions.

If you feel lost about getting started with essential oils you're in luck! Tomorrow I'll be going over the basics like how to use essential oils, safety issues, and more.

Whether you are new to essential oils or not, I hope it will be helpful for you. Don't worry if essential oils aren't your thing. As I said, the links at the end of this email have lots of natural approaches to health.

Ultimately, as you consider 'natural remedies,' I want you to remember this important fact:

The Best Defense is a Good Offense

Six years ago when I made lasting, real changes to my health (the kind of changes that I'm recommending in this ebook) I was thrilled with the results. I lost weight, cleared my skin up, and had more energy. I also found that I rarely got sick!

When you think about natural approaches to sickness, the best thing you can do is eat well, exercise, avoid toxins, etc. This ebook is all about helping you have more health days and fewer sick days.

So, here's to YOU and to more HEALTH days.

Extra Reading & Resources

Stocking your natural medicine cabinet
10 natural cold bustin' remedies
Flu fighting tea recipe
Natural pain remedies
Natural menstrual cramp remedies



GETTING STARTED WITH ESSENTIAL OILS

If you've been hearing a lot about essential oils and have no clue what they're really about, you're in luck.

Essential oils are the highly concentrated, aromatic essences of trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses, resins, and flowers. They're colorful (they can be clear, amber, yellow, green, and even dark blue!) and fun.

Essential oils have protective properties. They penetrate cell membranes and can diffuse throughout our blood and tissues. These particles are one of the few things small enough to cross the blood brain barrier. Essential oils are greaseless, never ever expire and will evaporate (so keep the lids on snug).

On average, each essential oil contains over 100 medicinal components with more being discovered every day.

Crazy and awesome, right?

Essential oils have been used for thousands of years for many applications. Today, there are well over 300 essential oils in use by professional practitioners, each with its own centuries confirmed practical application.

But don't worry! You certainly don't need 300 essential oils in your medicine cabinet to reap their benefits. A nice collection of 10 or so will do the trick for most things.

Choosing the best oils:

Making an essential oil takes a lot of work and in some cases, tons of plant material to make even just a tiny amount of essential oil. For instance, to make just 1 ounce of rose essential oil, you would need 60,000 roses.

It's no wonder high-quality essential oils may seem expensive.

But, when you consider you usually only need a couple drops and you can replace beauty products, first-aid creams and other household products with essential oils, it usually comes out to be cheaper and definitely more natural!

The key to producing therapeutic-grade essential oils is to preserve as many of the delicate compounds within the Essential Oil as possible. Some low-quality essential oils can be made from plants that were treated with pesticides and extracted with chemical solvents.

These are NOT the oils you want to use for you or your family.

Be sure to choose essential oils that are sourced from reputable farms without the use of GMOs, pesticides and other harmful chemicals. They are safer, and you generally have to use less because they are more potent than cheap oils.

Why use essential oils?

Essential oils seem like nature's perfect solution for the problems that chemicals, poor nutrition, and stress have added to our lives.

Consider the properties of essential oils:

- → They are a non-toxic alternative for you and your family.
- → They are environmentally-friendly.
- → They promote physical and emotional well-being.
- → They help to improve quality of life.
- → They can replace conventional household cleaners.
- → They can be used in DIY beauty products.
- → They are versatile!

Remember that to get great benefits and results you must use therapeutic-grade essential oils that have NOT been adulterated. Adulterated oils contain synthetic chemicals or compounds. And, those chemicals and compounds may actually be harmful to your body.

How to use essential oils safely:

Using essential oils isn't complicated, but you do want to follow a few good practices to reap the real benefits. Below is a simple, breakdown on safe application.

Aromatically

Aromatic uses of essential oils can heighten the senses and have positive effects for the mind and body.

- 1. Inhale the oil directly from the bottle: Simply smell it! You can rub a drop or two on your hands and cup your nose or just inhale directly from the bottle.
- 2. Diffuse the oils with a diffuser which disperses the oils in a micro-fine vapor throughout the air. A diffuser does not heat the oils which can damage their therapeutic properties.
- 3. Breathe in steamy vapors deeply by carefully pouring hot water into a glass bowl, adding in a couple drops of essential oils, and covering the bowl in a tent like fashion with a cloth or towel.

Topical Application

Young Living essential oils are safe to use topically on our skin or even our pet's fur. Because of their molecular structure, Essential Oils are rapidly absorbed by the skin. It takes seconds to get them into our bloodstream.

Massaging 1 - 4 drops (diluted with a carrier oil like olive oil or coconut oil) is a great way to topically use essential oils. Common areas for topical application include the feet, stomach, neck, and hands.

Internal Consumption

Many Young Living essential oils are safe to ingest as a dietary supplement or food flavoring. It's always important to follow the recommended dosage on individual product labels before taking oils internally. You can put essential oils in empty veggie capsules, in your water, put a drop in raw honey, or on bread. Citrus oils eat petrochemicals so use glass or stainless steel only to drink oils from.

I recommend reaching out to a trained aromatherapist if you think adding essential oils as part of supplemental routine would benefit you.

Of course, using essential oils in DIY cleaning products, beauty recipes, or personal care items is another simple way to utilize the power of essential oils.

But wait! Safety is important!

Before you start there are a few things to keep in mind because I want you to love your essential oil experience the way I do. So, do this mama proud and take care to do the following before jumping in:

There are 2 places we NEVER put essential oils: In the eyes or deep in ear canal.

If either of these accidently happens, it shouldn't damage your eye but it will sting and you can put in a couple drops of a carrier oil and it takes the sting out in seconds. Do NOT use water. Oil and water don't mix and sting will be worse. If you don't have access to a carrier oil (in the car, at a restaurant, etc.) find something fatty like milk or butter.

Do a skin test. It's a good idea to skin test an essential oil before using it. Everybody is different and just because one oil did incredible things for one

person doesn't automatically mean it will be a perfect fit for you, and in some rare instances an oil may irritate your skin:

- → Start with just one oil or blend at a time.
- → Apply the oil (neat or diluted with a carrier oil, as indicated on your bottle) to a small area first. When trying oils that are new to you, allow enough time (3 5) minutes for the body to respond before applying a second oil.
- → Placing oils on the bottom of your feet is most often a safe place to use essential oils topically if you experience irritation elsewhere.

Be careful when using with other chemicals. Most people don't think of their skin as full of chemicals, but certain things like cosmetics, personal-care products, soaps, and cleansers can contain synthetic chemicals. Your skin may have residual chemicals hanging out that could come in contact with your essential oils.

Some of these chemicals, especially petroleum-based chemicals, can penetrate and remain in the skin and fatty tissues for days or even weeks after use. Essentials oils may work against such toxins that are stored in your body, whether from personal care products, food, or the environment. Just another reason to avoid synthetic chemicals.

Keep "hot" oils away from children. Oils such as oregano, cinnamon, thyme, eucalyptus, mountain savory, lemon, and orange... or blends like Thieves, PanAway, Relieve It, and Exodus II should be stored away from children (although, really, I keep all my oils away from my children!).

These are also the types of oils that should always be diluted for both children and adults. If a child swallows an essential oil:

- → Seek immediately emergency medical attention, if necessary.
- → Give the child milk, cream, yogurt, or another safe, oil-soluble liquid to drink.

Finally, start with some basic oils.

Because the world of essential oils is so vast, it's easy to get overwhelmed when you are first starting out. I highly recommend choosing some basic oils and begin using them. This is truly the best way to learn about their potential and how they can fit into your life.

I personally recommend the Premium Starter Kit from Young Living as it includes 10 everyday oils that are the most popular oils with 100 uses. They are still the oils I use the most. It also comes with a diffuser and information on how to jump right in with the oils in a safe and effective way. (Not to mention that the initial investment in the package will save your money and the oils will last a long time!)

You can learn more about my recommended starter kit by clicking here.



HEALTHY HABITS: NATURAL LIVING

So... now that I've shed some light on the common toxins lurking in your everyday products, how do you feel about natural living now?

I find that people tend to fall into one of two categories:

First, there are the "I'm throwing everything away!" enthusiasts who want to ditch every last toxin *right now*.

Then there are the "I'm so overwhelmed and probably going to die" people who don't know where to start.

A word to both groups: Keep it simple.

Sure, these toxic chemicals are no laughing matter, so doing nothing is not the answer. But stress is it's own kind of toxin, and worrying over every little invisible danger is not healthy either. All you need to do is change one thing at a time. When it feels right, change another thing.

You so got this.



STEP ONE:

Ditch your fabric softener and/or dryer sheets and try some wool dryer balls instead. Or you can learn how to make your own here.

STEP TWO:

Try to replace one personal care item in your bathroom once a month. Consider all items like shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, perfume/cologne, hair styling products, lotion, deodorant, makeup, etc. You can find recipes for almost anything here or you can find pretty much everything you need through Young Living.

STEP THREE:

Switch out your all-purpose cleaner for a simple homemade recipe: Grab an empty spray bottle. Add ½ cup white vinegar (a quarter cup will work if it's a small bottle), 2 Tbs of baking soda, 10 drops of Melaleuca (Tea Tree) essential oil, and then fill with water. Shake before use. If you don't like the smell of vinegar, I recommend grabbing some Thieves cleaner from Young Living. It's awesome.

STEP FOUR:

Throw out any air fresheners or scented candles in your home. You can diffuse essential oils as a simple and non-toxic way to scent your home. Adding some live house plants is another simple way to clean your home's air naturally.

STEP FIVE:

Open your windows for 10 - 20 minutes each day to keep indoor air pollution down.

STEP SIX:

Think about what over-the-counter medications you use the most (pain reducer, allergy medication, etc.) Do a little research and find some more natural alternatives that support a healthy immune system and try them out. Even if you can't replace all your meds, every little bit helps. (Don't forget to consult your healthcare provider before ditching any prescribed medication.)

STEP SEVEN:

For the ladies, consider implementing "Makeup Free Monday."

STEP EIGHT:

Get in the habit of taking your shoes off in your home. Shoes track in a lot of pollutants and toxins. This simple step can reduce home toxins by 60% and it's better for your floors, too.

STEP NINE:

Consider switching out any Teflon cookware for cast iron or stainless steel. Teflon pans can leach toxic chemicals into your food. <u>Learn how to properly care for your cast iron cookware here</u> (it's so easy, promise!).



PILLARS FOUR & FIVE: SLEEP WELL, STRESS LESS

We've talked food. We've discussed exercise. We dove into natural living. If you're still with me (and I hope you are!) you are on your way to feeling amazing.

But we're not done.

The last part of this ebook covers the remaining two pillars of healthy living: Sleep and Stress Management. Both are super important.

Unfortunately, our society tends to applaud the people who sacrifice sleep and thrive in stress all in the name of success and discipline. It perpetuates the myth that you won't be successful if you're spending your time meditating or resting.

You can sleep when you're dead, right?

Um, sure. But you'll probably die a whole lot sooner if you really live that mantra. And I promise you won't be as healthy or happy (or productive) if you aren't getting your zzzz's and keeping stress in check.

The topics of sleep and stress can get pretty heavy, pretty fast. I'm going to do my best to distill the information into simple, practical steps that anyone can implement (I'm looking at you exhausted moms and overworked employees).

Today's Homework

First, I want you to honestly assess your sleep. Don't think too long about this. I mean, you know if you're getting enough sleep or not, right? How many hours do get you on a typical night? When do you typically fall asleep? Do you fall

asleep easily? Do you have trouble staying asleep at night? Write your answers down.

Second, <u>take this quick stress test</u>. It will only take a minute or two. Again, write your results down.

Alright. Hold on to those answers. We're going to tackle sleep with some easy tips to improve your sleeping patterns and your health.

Extra Reading & Resource

How constructive rest can ease stress and exhaustion
10 beautiful lessons learned from savasana
Personal spring cleaning
The benefits of earthing



WHO NEEDS SLEEP?

Hey.

This is your liver talking, and I'm speaking on behalf of all your vital organs. Listen, we think you're great. Really. But we've been meaning to talk to you about sleep for a while now...

I mean, I know there are lots of fun things to do at night, but we really need sleep to do our job properly. And our job is keeping you healthy. So can you dedicate a little more love to that whole sleep thing? The gang and I would really appreciate it.

Thank you! We know you won't regret it.

Sincerely,

Your Liver, Lenny.

~

Robin here again. Thanks for letting me share this lesson with Lenny. He's been bugging me all week to talk to you. And since he brought up the issue of sleep, I figured I could share my 5 essential tips for better sleep. I know it will make Lenny happy.

5 Essential Tips for Better Sleep

1. Make it a priority

For a lot of people the easiest solution to getting better sleep is simply making it a priority. Sleep will make your more productive. Give you more energy. Support your body's ability to stay healthy. And more.

If you are not dedicating at least 7 hours to sleep each night you need to start now. I actually want you to aim for 8 hours, but we can start with 7 and ease into it.

Think about the things that distract you from getting to bed on time. Is it taking a break from the kids? Work? Television? The internet? A good book? No matter what it is, you need to start respecting your body's NEED for sleep. Think about all the things you'll do when you feel more rested, have more energy, have less sick days, and experience better overall health. Hold on to those ideas when you are tempted to cheat on your sleep.

2. Have a routine

Most parents know how vitally important routine is for babies and young kids, particularly when it comes to sleep.

Guess what? You are no different.

Getting into a set bedtime routine may be the best thing you do for improving the quality of sleep you get.

There are a lot of ways you can approach your routine. I would recommend getting all those things that have to be done out of the way before you get too tired (brushing teeth, changing into pajamas, etc.).

I like to end my day with some gentle breathing exercises, some magnesium oil, and turning off most of the lights an hour or two before going to bed. You may enjoy taking a warm bath, meditation, journaling, etc. Find things that calm your mind and body (avoid any tense books or television shows) and enjoy that winding down time.

3. Darkness matters

Our brains are affected by light, especially artificial lights. If sleep is something you struggle with, trying to avoid as much light as possible could make a huge difference for your sleep quality.

Blackout curtains are a great solution for bedrooms with light pollution issues. Another less expensive solution is blackout coverings. Do a quick google search and you'll find some options.

Also consider any artificial lights that could be hindering your ability to sleep well. Blue light from televisions, phones, and computers have been shown to reduce melatonin levels. If giving up on technology before bed is hard, consider buying some cheap orange glasses (<u>like these</u>) that block out blue light to keep your sleep hormones happy. Just wear them as soon as the sun goes down. Sure, they're ugly. But they do the job.

4. Supplement wisely

There are a lot of supplements, both natural and pharmaceutical, on the market for sleep help. I personally recommend staying away from over the counter drugs as they can do more harm than good. I also personally don't recommend taking 'natural' melatonin supplements as they can mess up your hormones.

I have found that things like organic herbal teas, essential oils, magnesium (I prefer pure magnesium oil sprayed topically, <u>like this</u>) and eating a balanced diet are useful approaches to helping the body naturally fall asleep.

5. Try meditation

As someone who struggled with insomnia for years, and after trying everything under the sun to help it, I was amazed how starting a daily meditation practice helped me sleep better than almost anything else. If you're new to meditation, there are lots of apps to help guide you. I personally love the HEADSPACE app, but I'm sure there are other great resources, too. Even ten minutes a day can make a huge difference. Give it a week and see how it goes.

Remember, no matter how virtuous your diet is, or how dedicated you are with exercise, if you aren't sleeping well your health will suffer. Make the commitment to sleep better. Your body will most definitely thank you. (Especially Lenny).

Nighty night!

Extra Reading & Resource

How to sleep better naturally
Herbal dream pillow tutorial
Essential oils for insomnia



IS STRESS RUINING YOUR HEALTH?

We live in pretty convenient times.

I mean, we don't have to hunt or forage our own food. We don't live in caves or tents. We have electricity, the internet, and ice cream. (I'm particularly grateful for that last one!) And, hey, we generally don't have to worry about bear attacks while we sleep.

I mean, our lives are pretty cool.

Still, we have our own issues that our ancestors didn't have to face. In fact, as scary as random bear attacks may seem, our bodies are actually biologically designed to handle those brief moments of intense stress better than the more subtle chronic stress of our modern world.

Think about the things that are always bubbling in the back of your mind: Finances, deadlines, never ending to-do lists, commuting, traffic, etc. The problem with the stress we face (versus those random bear attacks), is that it tends to be ongoing. With a bear, we fight or take flight, and move on. Our modern stress tends, on the other hand, to stick around indefinitely.

That prolonged state of stress keeps our hormones in fight or flight mode and wreaks havoc on our body.

Trust me, not dealing with stress can be a major destroyer of good health. But once again, simplicity is our friend. If you know stress is taking its toll on your health, here are my five tips to help you keep it in check.

5 Tips for Dealing with Stress

1. Recognize when you're stressed

Whether you tend to consume a whole carton of Häagen-Dazs in a single sitting or find yourself unable to turn your mind off at night, recognizing your personal symptoms for stress is really important.

I can always tell when I'm stressed because my shoulders freeze with tension and I suddenly become super grumpy with my husband (sorry, Tom). When I feel those tell-tale signs come on, I stop and think: What's stressing me out?

Sometimes that simple question is enough to keep me from getting consumed by stress. If I'm stressed that my kids are fighting, or I feel rushed to meet a deadline, or whatever... a recognition of my emotional well-being can help me change my attitude.

Sometimes that's all you need to be happy.

2. Take time to meditate daily

Hey, look! There's that meditation suggestion again.

Whether it's a few minutes or a couple hours, this simple practice will improve your health. Promise.

Meditation can take on a lot of different forms. One simple method is to find a comfortable place to sit (where you won't be distracted by technology or kids), close your eyes, and focus on your breath.

Inhale, Exhale, Inhale, Exhale,

If your mind starts to wonder and you find yourself thinking about dinner, to-do lists, or your most recent awkward conversation just bring your mind back to your breath.

Inhale, Exhale, Inhale, Exhale,

This keeps you focused on the present. It also deepens your breath which enhances your body's overall function and health. Again, meditation can look

like a lot of things but do find something that keeps your mind focused on the present moment. Pray. List the things you're grateful for. Visualize your dreams. There are endless possibilities.

3. Make time for fun

It's actually really sad that I have to remind people to have fun. But I know some people need the reminder... like myself. It's so easy to get wrapped up in work, projects, kids, etc. But carving out space for fun is essential to good health.

The key, again, is to do something that's fun for you. For some that may mean hitting up a big party. For this introvert (hello), that's far from my idea of fun. Reading a book, going for a hike, dancing to music, hanging with close friends, catching a movie, biking, playing a game of tag... there are lots of options.

Find your fun. Schedule it in.

4. Know how to say 'NO'

Do you fall victim to the "Sure! I can do that" mentality? Do you have a hard time saying "no" to any favor, project, or opportunity that comes your way? The simple (but not necessarily easy) solution to being too busy is to stop accepting every "Can you do me a favor?" that comes your way. I'm not saying you have to be mean. I'm just saying that burnout is a very real issue in our society.

Learn how to say no gracefully, as needed.

5. Be willing to change

When "no" isn't enough, consider how you can change your situation. Maybe you're so busy because your job comes with a long commute. If that commute is ruining your happiness and wellbeing, maybe it's time to consider changing jobs.

I don't know your personal situation, but from my own experience I know change can be scary. Last year my family moved from a tiny little town in Northern Utah to New Zealand. Hello, big change.

Was it easy moving further away from our family or friends? No. But both my husband and I knew we needed a change in environment to help us keep more peace in our lives. We both have found a greater work/life balance by surrounding ourselves with people who believe in work/life balance.

If you have a nagging feeling that something in your life needs a switch-a-roo, consider making the change. Most things in life aren't permanent, but if you aren't willing to try and change, that nagging stress could do you in.

Remember, you deserve to be happy. And stress is the number one source of unhappiness. Take your stress seriously and be willing to adjust your life to make more room for smiles.

Extra Reading & Resource

Stressed out: The dangers of obsessive nutrition 8 signs your metabolism is in the toilet How to stay healthy working shift jobs The cure for busy



HEALTHY HABITS: SLEEP WELL & STRESS LESS

Hopefully the idea of sleeping well and stressing less makes you happy. And hopefully you're committed to making the changes you need to enhance both these areas of your life.

Whether that's something major like changing your job situation or something more minor like meditating for ten minutes a day... whatever you feel you need to do I'm here to tell you: Yes, you can!

You can get quality sleep. You can manage stress. You can make time for fun. Yes, you can!

Today I have your "Healthy Habits" action plan for the Sleep and Stress pillars. Like the other plans, remember to start with #1 and move on once the new habit feels comfortable.

Don't feel rushed in completing any of these action plans. The important thing is that you're working on something. There is no deadline here.

——— healthy habits ———— ACTION PLAN FOR 'SLEEP WELL & STRESS LESS'

STEP ONE:

Carve out 5 minutes every day to step away from whatever you're doing and meditate. This can be as simple as focusing on deep breathing, praying, listing what you're grateful for, etc. Make this a daily habit for the rest of your life and notice how those five minutes change everything for the better.

STEP TWO:

Establish your own bedtime routine. Aim to start your routine at least 30 minutes before you want to go to bed. The longer you give your body to wind down the better, but not if that means you're hitting the hay at 2 in the morning.

STEP THREE:

Make a commitment to go to bed earlier. Ideally you should aim for a 10 pm bedtime, but any time before midnight will benefit your health. Remember, you want at least 7 hours of sleep at night, so if you have to wake up super early, be dedicated about going to bed early.

STEP FOUR:

Make a list of activities you think are FUN. Schedule some time to do one thing on that list every week.

STEP FIVE:

Take some time to journal about the things in your life that make you feel stressed. Once you have your list, circle the top three offenders. Take some time to consider what you could do to change the circumstances to reduce your stress. Be brave and make the necessary changes.

It's graduation day! Congratulations!!

I sincerely hope you've enjoyed this three week challenge. I hope you've learned something meaningful. More importantly I hope you feel empowered to live a healthier life.

At the heart of everything I've shared is a sincere desire for you to be happy. Of course, happiness is more than just healthy living. Still, I firmly believe that it's a lot easier to be happy when our bodies are thriving.

Even though this is just a basic 3-week program, the information and action plans are designed to continue guiding you as you move onward.

It's one big journey, so enjoy the ride.

I'd love to know your thoughts on the book. I'm always trying to better connect with my readers and provide the best information. Feel free to reach out to me with your thoughts. I read every email that comes my way. (I can't promise to reply to every email, but I do read them all!) If you have a minute I'd love to hear from you: robin@thankyourbody.com

Can I ask you one last favor?

If you found this ebook useful, would you mind sharing it with a friend?

My goal is to help as many people live healthier, happier lives. My mission is to keep things simple and do-able, and hopefully you've felt this course was in line with that mission. Despite the many hours that went into this book, I've

kept it totally free in hopes of reaching more individuals who want to feel awesome.

I'll be forever grateful for your help in spreading that message! You can send your friends to <u>Thank Your Body</u> where they can sign up for their own free copy. Be sure to share your testimonial to help seal the deal.

Big thanks for letting me come into your home each day. Even though you've reached the end of the book, I'm still cheering you on! Rah! Rah!

Now. Go forth and make the simple changes that will change your life forever. I'm so excited for what's ahead for you!

YOU are inspiring. Thank you.

robin Amil